651 There is proof that trade tends to grow year by year in the ease with
436 which the natives now secure the five-franc piece needed to pay their
457 tax. The Europeans who live among the Mossi, including all the riflemen and circle /an administrative district/ guards, do not put into circulation a quarter of the five-franc pieces which are required each year from the natives. At first the Mossi were taken by surprise and had to give 10, 000 or even 15, 000 cowries to obtain /62/ this famous coin, this charm, which was to free them from all difficulties with the Whites. At the official rate of exchange this coin is worth 5, 000 cowries. Nowadays it is very difficult to find a native willing to give this much for one of the coins. The usual exchange rate is from 3, 500 to 4, 000 cowries; French currency has depreciated. This must mean that the natives find elsewhere, through trading, this indispensable coin. They know that the tax must be paid every year, and instead of waiting until the last minute, as soon as they have accumulated the necessary cowries, they secure the five-franc pieces from those who have fetched them from afar. The coins flow in; the rate of exchange goes down.

439 Nowadays, trading is less active toward the north. Formerly the
567 Mossi supplied Timbuktu, the desert regions, and even Morocco with slaves. The Gourounsi and Bousansé were frequently raided with the sole intent of obtaining slaves. The Mossi even sold each other into slavery, and prior to the French occupation a woman and even more a young girl or boy did not dare venture alone a few hundred meters from the village; they were too afraid that they might not return. It is said that the Mossi even supplied the Constantinople court with eunuchs; and when the great Cardinal Lavigerie was head of the Algerian Arab Orphanage, officers once brought him small children rescued in the desert. They were very young Mossi who had been sold in Saraféré or Timbuktu and whom our officers had found enclosed in bags carried by camels in a caravan halted by our troops. These children were raised in Malta, and they returned to Mossi country where they rendered significant services. Now the establishment of an administrative center in Kaya, near the important market of Salmatenga, will no doubt promote trade in this northern region.

439 Nowadays the trade between Ouagadougou and Tenkodogo on the one hand, and Ouahigouya (in Mossi country), Saraféré, and Timbuktu or Dori (called Gyémaré by the natives) on the other hand, amounts to very little. The Mossi export kola nuts which they have brought

439 We must add without further delay, however, that it is not the Mossi who do this trading but the Yarsé we know so /538/ well, and the Haoussa settled in Mossi territory. Mossi trade, therefore, is not really Mossi, or at least it was not in the past. If it has now begun to be to some extent, it is thanks to French settlement in the territory.

439 After conquering Mossi lands (1896), indeed, we levied a tax
651 on the population. This tax, low at first, rose rapidly over the last few years. In 1906 it amounted to 311,000 francs in the Ouagadougou circle itself, for a population of 861,000 inhabitants. In 1907 it rose to 366,000 francs, in 1909 to 555,000 francs, in 1910 to 656,000 francs. Furthermore, beginning in 1908, it was exacted with so much strictness and on such short notice that it was exactly as though its amount had been increased threefold. Under the circumstances, the Mossi were forced to take to trading in order
[436] to secure the French money they did not have, since the local currency is the cowrie and the French administration will not take it. They were forced to go and sell their oxen, even their cows, something the Black will only consent to do when hard pressed and in the direst need. In short, the Mossi now organize small caravans on a village basis. Local young men are sent in groups to Ouanké to
[484] sell cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, local horses, and cotton strips. They bring back either French currency or kola nuts. When they bring nuts, they go and sell them at Saraféré or Sofara and get salt or 5-franc pieces. In other words, the Mossi are taking to trade, owing to a pressing need.

439 The Mossi, nevertheless, may hardly be regarded as a trader. He has been one for an extremely short time, and he is not much of a trader yet.

To summarize, there is a strong current of exchange trading in Mossi territory from north to south and south to north. There are also important market towns in the territory, or rather large market villages, as we already know. This exchange trading and those important markets, however, are the creation and achievement of the Yarsé and of a small number of Haoussa. The Mossi themselves, in the past, had no part in all this, except /539/ for the fact that the

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stopped at "Fura, a large market place." On the fourth day it stopped at Dullugu (probably present-day Doulougou), and on the fifth day at "Dakay [or Rakay] a place belonging to the territory of Mosi." Finally, on the thirteenth day it arrived at Mane.[4] The last caravan route that Barth reported ran from:

> Kaye to Belussa [Boulsa], and thence to Belanga [Bilanga] ... From Belussa a person on horseback reaches Belanga comfortably the second day, the great station between these two towns being Alitinga, still belonging to Mosi, and an important place, inhabited by Mosi and Hausa traders; but common native travellers generally halt twice between Belanga and Alitinga, in Nyennyega and Koburi [Kouri], and once between Alitinga and Belanga, in a Gurma village called Yamba.

The goods which these caravans carried appear to have varied a great deal. Barth met a Mossi caravan at Dori, southeast of Timbuktu, and reported that to this market:

> The people of Mosi bring chiefly their fine donkeys, which are greatly sought after; and a numerous body of people of the Sheikh A'hmedu, of Hamda-Ailahi, had left a few days before with a number of asses which they had brought here. Besides asses, the people of Mosi supply this market with gabaga [cotton strips] or tari, as the Arabs near Timbuktu call them, cotton being extremely cheap in their country, so that in the great market place of that country, especially in Kulfela [Koupela, but really at Pouitenga a few miles away] an indigo-colored shirt is not worth more than from 700 to 800 [cowry] shells ... Besides salt, cotton strips, dyed cloth, Kola nuts, corn, and asses, some copper manufactured chiefly into large drinking vessels is also brought into the market by the people of Mosi. However, I do not think they manufacture the copper vessels themselves, but bring them from Asanti. (Barth 1859 : III, 203–4)

Adolphe Krause, a German who was actually the first European to enter Mossi country, went through Wagadougou with a load of kola nuts destined for Timbuktu. He joined the caravan at Salaga on July 7, 1885, stopped at the Bere market in Mossi country during August, and then proceeded to their capital where he remained until October 26 before resuming his northward journey (Krause 1887–8).

Felix Dubois, who visited Timbuktu in 1895, gives us some information on the actual products which the Mossi traded there. He reported that the Mossi came to the market organized into caravans of oxen, donkeys and porters, and brought such commodities as livestock, millet, rice, manioc, peanuts, honey, kola nuts, peppers, dried onions, tobacco, dried fish, soap, iron, antimony, lead, cotton bands, straw hats, mats, jars, pots and calabashes. These goods the Mossi

(4) Barth's skill as a reporter is evident here. He is quite correct in disbelieving that the caravans could have reached Kong on the tenth day. Marc. 1908, agrees with Barth.

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people also assemble sheep of
the Mossi variety, which are very puny. The larger variety of long-haired 175 437
Macina sheep are seldom exported. Once the livestock has been assembled, 439
the chief of the caravan would also provide himself with cotton bands. [437]
This native fabric has often been described; it is commonly used on the [436]
caravan routes to pay for the food of the travellers. (Marc 1909 : 172)

Most of the caravans through Mossi country traveled as much as 175
fifteen or twenty miles a day. They left at the first sign of dawn, 437
traveled steadily until the heat became too intense, and then stopped 484
to rest. They resumed their march when the sun was midway between
the zenith and the horizon, and then stopped at some village or stream
for the night. This schedule was followed on the next day if the
caravan was far from a market center, but in the vicinity of a large
market the caravan might remain stationary as many as six days while
its merchants traded for more livestock or merchandise. This being 175
the case, it is difficult to gauge how long it took the caravans to make 437
the journey from Salaga in Ghana to Timbuktu. Our best data come 484
from an analysis of Krauss' itinerary. He left Salaga with a caravan 487
on July 7, 1885, heading north through Walwale, and arrived in Bere, 103
a distance of some 250 miles (today's road mileage) towards the end
of August. Famine delayed the caravan at Bere for some time, and he [731]
did not complete the 50 miles or so to Wagadougou until September
24. He remained in the Mossi capital until October 26, some thirty-
two days, before his caravan headed north again through Tema,
Yatenga and Bandiagara. Krauss does not tell us when he reached
Douentza, some 400 miles northweast of Wagadougou, or how long
he remained there, but on December 7, a few days after he had left
Douenzta on the last 200- or 250-mile leg of his voyage to Timbuktu,
the Moro Naba ordered him to return to Wagadougou. It is possible
that it took Krauss' caravan some thirty-five odd days to make the
trip from Wagadougou to Douentza. His return to Wagadougou took
him only about thirty days, since he arrived there on January 7, 1886.
He apparently had to wait some fifteen days there for a caravan going
south, because he did not leave the Mossi capital until January 22,
1886 (Krause 1887–88). Judging from this itinerary, it probably took
caravans between five and six months to travel from the forest zones
to the desert, a distance of about a thousand miles at the most. This
averages about six or seven miles a day, with the normal stops for rest
and marketing, instead of the fifteen or twenty miles a day which the
average caravan covered when it was on the road.

The caravans did not encounter many dangers or difficulties during 175
their voyage. When the caravaneers had friends along the way they 437
stopped at their friends' homes for the night, and when they camped 484
in uninhabited places men were posted to protect the goods and live-
stock against marauding beasts and thieves.

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It is clear that the volume of this trade could not have been enlarged since the French conquest which, as we know, had disrupted Mossi society. Therefore our conclusion must be that it must have existed prior to the coming of the Europeans.

The caravaneers used cowries and cloth as trade currency and in some cases even bartered one type of commodity for another. Cowries appear to have been the chief currency used and came close to being used for all purposes. Evidence for the use of cloth as currency comes from Barth and Marc. Barth met a trader who had

> ... a good quantity of the gabaga, or cotton strips, of Mosi with him, which form the staple currency in the whole tract of country from Libta to Timbuktu, ten Dr'a being reckoned equal to one hundred shells. (Barth 1859 : III, 198)

The big rolls of cotton cloth which Marc saw being loaded by Mossi caravaneers were said by them to serve the purpose of buying food ("They are for eating") in regions where cloth was the necessary currency (Marc 1909 : 172 f.n.). The traders apparently resorted to barter whenever and wherever they could or when their currency was in short supply. This appears to have been the case when Binger visited the Mossi in 1888. Cowries were then in short supply and the people were using slaves, valued at 50,000 to 65,000 cowries apiece, to obtain goods. Horses could be bought for as many as two or four slaves apiece. Traders apparently kept the cowry equivalence in mind when using other commodities to barter with, but we cannot be sure of this since Binger himself, and not the traders, may have been conscious of the equivalence (Binger 1892 : II, 498).

The prices which the traders paid and received for their goods differed greatly from place to place, according to the season of the year and over a span of several years. The earliest price data are given by Barth for the 1850's:

> As regards Selga [Salaga], the district to which the Hausa traders go for their supply of this article, three points are considered essential to the business of the Kola trade; first, that the people of Mosi bring their asses; secondly, that the Tonawa, or natives of Asanti, bring the nut in sufficient quantities; and thirdly, that the state of the road is such as not to prevent the Hausa people from arriving. If one of these conditions is wanting, the trade is not flourishing. The price of the asses rises with the cheapness of the guro [kola nut]. The average price of an ass in the market of Selga is 15,000 [cowry] Shell: While in Hausa the general price does not exceed 5,000. But the fataki, or native traders, take only as many asses with them from Hausa as are necessary for transporting their luggage, as the toll, or

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175 436 437 Cowries used to be chief medium of exchange in Mossi markets until the Europeans arrived. In addition the people bartered specific goods for other products. The prices of goods in these markets fluctuated from time to time. Prices were highest during the planting season when most goods were scarce, and lowest during the harvest periods, but we have little precise information about the prices of goods in the traditional markets. Even Barth's information is too sketchy to deal with. Our first reliable data come from Tauxier, whose writings cover the first decade (1896-1906) of the conquest. Using the then official rate of one franc equals 1,000 cowries, the prices of a few representative products were: horses, 40 to 100 francs (40,000 to 100,000 cowries); cattle, 30 to 40 francs (30,000 to 40,000 cowries); chickens, 250 cowries; guinea fowls, 250 to 300 cowries; hides, 3,000 cowries; pottery jars, 300 cowries; cotton trousers, 200 cowries; baskets, 1,500 cowries; and locust-bean balls, 100 cowries (Tauxier 1912 : 466 ff.).

175 435 Mangin, whose work covers the period from about 1910 to 1913, when the value of the franc was lowered to one franc equals 700 to 800 cowries, lists the approximate prices for the following goods: "Millet, 0.02 franc a kilogram; rice, 0.10 franc a kilogram; *fabirama*, 0.05 franc a kilogram; shea butter, 0.50 franc a kilogram; milk butter, 1.50 francs a kilogram; peanuts, 0.07 franc a kilogram; peanut oil, 0.50 franc a liter; one jar of ordinary millet beer, containing about six to eight liters, 0.20 franc; one jar of strong millet beer *(tose)*, containing about six to eight liters, 0.40 franc; hydromel *(bese)*, 0.15 franc a liter; chicken, 0.40 franc; average goat, 3 to 4 francs; large goat, 8 to 10 francs; average sheep, 3.50 francs for a ram, 4 francs, for an ewe; large sheep, 8 to 10 francs; donkey, 25 to 30 francs; horse, 150 francs; small cow (no hump), 50 francs; zebu cow, 70 francs; goat skin, 0.30 franc; cow skin, 1 franc; salt bars, from 1.50 to 2 francs a kilogram; kola nuts, from 0.03 to 0.10 franc apiece; one hoe, about 0.60 franc; cloth: strip of white cloth, 0.05 franc, about 0.60 franc a cubit; white blanket, 2 francs; indigo-dyed blanket, 3 francs; striped blanket, 4 francs; medium-sized shirt, 2.50 francs" (Mangin 1921 : 53). In dealing with these prices, a number of things should be kept in mind: first of all, these prices fluctuated very much during the year; secondly [436] they varied from region to region within the country; and thirdly, although these prices are given in francs during this period, it was still possible to use cowries to buy a large number of the products.

177 436 [43] [43] Enormous changes have taken place in the Mossi economic and exchange systems over the decades following the studies of Tauxier and Mangin. Even before, but certainly after World War I, the French pressure on the Mossi to pay taxes in francs finally resulted

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in the adoption of this currency as the medium of exchange in most markets.[11] The one-franc piece and coins of smaller denominations were those most often used because they were ideally suited to the petty trading that took place in the markets. The franc even became the standard of value in the larger markets, but one receives only 3 local francs for a five-franc note C.F.A. or seven francs for a ten-franc note C.F.A. These changes in value seem to occur by common consensus, since it is impossible to discover who it was that changed the exchange rate. A further fact is that many Europeans remain unaware of these changes since they seldom go to the local markets themselves. When they do go and insist upon the official exchange rate, the "unofficial" market chief appears and takes over the situation, giving the *nansaro* ("conqueror" or "master," the way in which every European is regarded) what he wishes.

While the equivalence between the cowrie, the old brass franc, and the franc C.F.A. works splendidly when products are sold in small quantities, I found the system difficult to understand when more expensive goods are traded. For example, when one buys meat, an expensive item, the butcher accepts either the official francs or the local currency and gives change in both. The difficulty here is that since the butcher uses no scales, one is never sure about the price or about the system of value the butcher is using. The most that can be done if one does not receive as much meat as expected is to haggle with the butcher until he adds more. However, this haggling leaves unresolved the problem of the value of one's official money in terms of the unofficial money, and the product which it is intended to buy. One is thus left with the *impression* that there must be an internal consistency to the exchange system, or barring this, that the local people accept the system as it is as a matter of expediency. On the other hand, the vendors of products with fixed prices such as matches, cigarettes and the like appear to make differential profits when they

(11) Mangin (1921 : 61–62) reports that the Mossi had great difficulty obtaining the five-franc piece which they needed to pay their taxes because the "Europeans who live in Mossi country, including all the riflemen and provincial guards do not put into circulation a quarter of the five-franc pieces which are required each year from the natives. At first the Mossi were taken by surprise and had to give 10 or even 15,000 cowries to obtain this famous coin, this *groegree* which was to free them from all difficulties with the white man. And yet at the official rate of exchange this coin is worth 5,000 cowries. Nowadays it is very difficult to find a native willing to give this much for one of the coins. The usual exchange rate varies from 3,500 to 4,000 cowries: the French currency has been depreciated. This must mean that the natives find elsewhere —through trading— this indispensable coin. They know that the tax must be paid every year, and instead of waiting till the last minute, as soon as they have accumulated the necessary cowries they secure the five-franc pieces from those who have fetched them from far away. The coins flow into the country, and the rate of exchange goes down."

434 use one type of currency rather than another. For example, a petty
435 trader often buys a package of European cigarettes for 20 francs
443 C.F.A. in the Wagadougou market for retail in the local markets.
Here he sells some individual cigarettes at the price of two for 5 francs C.F.A., some at two for 5 old-fashioned francs (making a total of about 21 francs C.F.A.). The vendors are fully aware of this profit differential, but make no attempt to insist on one currency over the other. Furthermore, they appeared indifferent when I suggested that I planned to take advantage of the price differential which I suspected in the two systems. It appears that they believe it would be a waste of time to try to obtain the profit differential.

437 Barter as a form of exchange had just about disappeared from the
435 larger markets in Mossi country, but it exists alongside the use of
443 currency in the local markets, especially in connection with foodstuffs
[178] and other vegetable commodities. People tend to resort to barter when they wish to exchange a specific product for another. Thus, a woman who normally sells rice for currency sometimes will suddenly refuse to accept money and insist on exchanging the rice for cotton or peanuts. The bartering then takes the form of a half-calabash of rice for a half-calabash of either peanuts or cotton, depending upon which products are desired. This equivalence seems always to be maintained regardless of the currency value of rice, cotton, or peanuts at the market on the day in question. For example, a woman who was looking for persons with whom she could exchange peanuts for rice and she refused to sell peanuts to me. I asked why she would not sell the peanuts and then take the money and buy rice with it. She said that if she did so, she would suffer a dual loss: first, in selling the peanuts, each valued at 100 cowries (one-half franc of unofficial currency) for 5 francs. I counted the nuts, which amounted to about 120, and then asked for the customary *lenga* (bonus) and received 36 more peanuts worth 1.5 franc. On the next market day I observed that peanuts were not being sold but only bartered for cotton which was being sold. I decided to test the system. I bought 2 old-fashioned francs' worth of cotton at 100 cowries a ball, and took them over to the woman bartering peanuts for cotton. She accepted the balls of cotton, measured them in a calabash, and then gave me the same volume of peanuts in exchange. I counted the nuts and discovered that I had received some 200 nuts for only 2 francs. When I discussed this experiment with some of the people, they admitted knowing
[123] about this practice and said that they did this at times. I then suggested that it would be possible to manipulate the system to one's advantage, but was again greeted with a show of indifference by most of my auditors. One man eventually said that I would lose because prices changed.